

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Gender literature post-independence and in the fag end of 20th century has been impregnated with a new phrase ‘women empowerment’. Transforming women to be self-dependent by enabling access to freedom, mobility, resources and opportunities (denied earlier citing their gender) tantamount to women empowerment. Having control over their lives, participating in decision making, being influential in social milieu, conducive environment for proactive behaviour leading to social change is what is expected by them. The expectation becomes more prominent if the women belong to tribal belts, especially a PVTG. It is more so pronounced because of their isolation, innate ignorance, lack of awareness on what they are entitled to and timid nature that prevents them to claim even their legitimate rights. Ultimately one can see opportunities to make and empower themselves to be pathetically weak. Only if access is assured can one speak of sustenance/ sustainability. These aspects cannot be generalized. Active research work on their specific social contexts has to be done to come out with concrete notions on what they (tribal women) are and what their status is. Infusing self – reliance by facilitating the appropriate mechanisms for capacity building and directing their lives towards desired goals should be a research goal.

These factors kindled a genuine interest to launch on the study entitled “Empowerment and Sustainable Development of Senguttaiyur Village Irular Tribe Women on Eco – based Well – being Strategies “ choosing Senguttaiyur village (in Tholampalayam Panchayat of Karamadai Block in Coimbatore District) and the dwellers – the Irular tribe as the large sample for conduct of the study adopting multi-level purposive sampling. The objectives of the study included:

- **Locate a homogenous Irular Settlement with marginal development indices**
- **Find out the socio- economic profile of the settlement**
- **Identify unique characteristics of Irular women on human societal pursuits**
- **Enable samples to realize the limitations and constraints for empowerment**
- **Initiate eco - based livelihood options through multi-pronged interventions**
- **Execute prospects for community development and tribal well being**
- **Analyze Empowerment status of sample post intervention**

The salient findings of the study are summarized under the ensuing pages.

To start with the research design included an ethnographic study which analyzed the feasibility for conducting such a study and an investigatory study which found out prospects for choosing a homogenous settlement in the locale. This explained in detail the status of the settlement, the environment and the tribe residing there.

From the 17 Panchayats encompassing Karamadai block three which were homogenous settlements (only Irular) were selected based on demographic profile. Tholampalayam was chosen from among those three. Senguttaiyur (Senkuttai) is an exclusive tribal settlement in Tholampalayam Block claiming a very primitive lineage and an exclusive dialect. They were very unique. They were a traditional group, but not much isolated. Hence they are an eclectic group who showed inclination to change.

- **The Dwellers:** The settlement in Seguttaiyur is a small village comprising of 67 families and a total population of 290 inclusive of 70 people who are in the unproductive ages. **Only 54 families (comprising 249 members) responded** to participate in the survey. **Others by virtue of their cohort- specific shyness, shunned to be a part of the programme.**

More than one half of the women and men (31.8%) too respectively had been married away before they attained the prescribed age for marriage (**18 and 24 years**). Evidently the reproductive health status of the women in the settlement was questionable. Almost one third of the total sample (31.3%) was found to be **illiterate**. Nevertheless 34 per cent had studied up to Matriculation. Education beyond that was found to be sparse.

The free supply of rice in ration shops had **changed their food pattern** to include rice almost daily in their diet. They preferred traditional cooking methods of using fire wood rather than gas to save cost, and also preferred cooking in traditional boiling methods to modern ones. The dwellers appeared to be relatively healthy with illnesses reported once in a while for which they preferred **allopathy**. Knowledge on palliative treatments was boasted of.

Tattoo culture though was prevalent among older people, had slightly faded among younger generation. Personal hygiene was the sector where the settlers pitifully failed; they never practiced daily bathing and use of soaps, but the trend was found to be slightly changing.

Livelihood aspect revealed **farming** (27.8%), especially **horticultural** activities to have been taken up in small patches of forest land was significant. They **just claimed ownership** to such land and did farming just to cater to their family needs. They did **not possess any title or deed** to that land. Lack of rains to aid in fertile irrigation and fear of elephants damaging the crop, prevented them farming on a larger scale. Both semi - skilled and unskilled jobs were the other major occupational avenues taken up. Vocations in the **unorganized sector** only surfaced in approximately 90- 95 per cent of the responses, highlighting that this factor has contributed to their **low subsistence living. Thriving literally on subsistence living the samples definitely lacked in food security.**

On sensitive aspects like religion, politics and social participation, women faced restrictions. A few had embraced Christianity, while the rest were Hindus. Politics was beyond their fancy, while socialization ended with attending functions related to the cohort and the settlement like puberty, festivals etc.

- **The Women:** Women were the units of study. The study revealed nearly 80 per cent of them to belong to the **economic active age group** with maximum representation in 36-45 years (33.3%). More than **one half** (55.5%) were **illiterates** followed by 20.3 per cent who had done primary school level. Ironically **28 per cent were widowed**. Stipulations laid by Government on age of marriage were given least importance in more than one half of the sample's lives. A good 94 per cent were married off before 24 years of age. Analysis of BMI projected 46 per cent as underweight, while 36 per cent were normal. The rest evidently qualified for being overweight.

The study primarily revealed only 77.77 per cent (42 out of 54) to have preferred to **earn for a living**. Farming in forest land (42.9 %) as help to their spouse was a major livelihood activity taken up. The MGNRES Scheme by the Central Government was a boon for 21.4 per cent who had an assured income at least for those specified 100 days. A majority of 62 per cent of the samples took up jobs for more than 20 days in a month, while ten per cent were able to get one only for less than ten days. **Samples relied on collection, processing and sale of Minor Forest Produce (MFP), accessible from the reserve forest area like Alibizia amara (Arappu) and tamarind and livestock rearing (cattle, goat etc.), broom making and the like.** They were found to be engaged mainly in all such gender oriented prospects, proving that these jobs contribute to **feminization of labour**. Their

resource management behaviour was not much fascinating. The first hypothesis (H₁) set for the study is hence proved.

- **Women's Woes:** It was very agonizing to record a good 34 per cent to have had their prime (first delivery) before 18 years of age. Another feature was 70 per cent reporting not to have had any antenatal or prenatal care. Assistance in delivery was mainly the mother. Around 22 per cent had had their confinement in hospitals assisted by medical personnel. It was indeed gratifying to record 90 per cent of the samples to have had normal delivery. It was surprising to record the duration of their lactation period. **Almost a half of the samples breastfed for three to five years, a characteristic, unique to the chosen tribal which in itself is a sign of good health. One third (32%) of the women were aware of family planning measures.**
- **Gender – specific Idiosyncrasies:** The settlement's gender specific idiosyncrasies were alarming and agonizing. Even in this technological era they practiced confining girls who had attained puberty and women after confinement (delivery) along with the infant and all women during menstrual periods (7-10 days) to stay outside the house for periods exceeding three months. Socialization was permitted amongst the families only after they conduct puberty function with a great pomp.
- **Settlement scenario: Agrarian** households predominated. Nevertheless, the households were found to pursue **survival livelihood strategies**. The study therefore proved that the sample thrived on **subsistence living**. Actually the women of the households were found to be working as **unpaid family workers**.

The women strength of the settlement was 49.4 per cent of the total population, the sex ratio being 1000: 998. Among them only 42 per cent reported to be engaging in activities that contribute to their family income. A good 35 per cent of the samples were found to be **dependent**. The major point revealed by the findings is that even if they were nuclear (46%), the number of children, begotten in a family was above governmental norms (4-6 or even more). The **human capital component** available for the families was very low in that **35 per cent** of the sample population was in the **unproductive age**; evidently their care was the onus of those who were earning. Illiteracy was another major black mark.

The inhabitants of the settlement used traditional **tribal based technologies** for their survival issues and were found to be quite raw with little or no knowledge on the

technological advancements in livelihood strategies. Every other approach was achieved only adopting **indigenous skills and tools**.

It was very agonizing to record for more than **one half of the sample**, the monthly family income was **below Rs. 5000/-** and applying data given by HUDCO document of 2016, all belonged to **Economically Weaker Section (EWS)** households. Food followed by clothing was the two items where the samples had shown much interest in expenditure planning; all of them had borrowed and were in debts. Yet majority was found to practice savings. Though none spoke of assets, they were owners of livestock and consumer durables obtained as freebies from State Government.

Their housing pattern was highly pathetic. Many lived in kutcha houses built of non-durable materials. Majority of **84 per cent of the families lived in a one – room small house**, in 88 per cent of the houses there was only one window, while many did not have a pucca kitchen. Cooking and bathing outside the house was common. **None of the houses had toilet facilities**. All practiced open defecation. They also encountered several other problems related to housing. **Essential constituents of quality housing, namely, IAQ, cubic space adequacy, ventilation and sanitation were inadequately provided for the households. Another important finding was that none of the samples were sanctioned Scheme houses which they were entitled to during the period of study.**

Access to water was from underground well, supplied through taps. Fuel wood (agro wastes) and fodder were collected from the forest area. Food supply through Public distribution system (fair price shops) though not adequate, met minimum needs of the families. There was a Government bus plying on the Karamadai Senguttaiyur route, making two trips a day. Communication with the outside world was never thought of by many as they never had a public telephone, though a few possessed mobile phones. Entertainment received minimal attention from the settlement dwellers. All of them possessed unique identification cards like Aadhar and voter ID and ration cards. Access to major utility services like hospitals, clinics, educational institutions, police station being very far was unapproachable during emergencies.

➤ **Status quo of Irular women**

- **Socio economic parameters:** Social and economic conditions are the major determinants of health and well - being. Major ones include **income, education, nutritional**

status and **housing** (quantifiable parameters). Income and education have been addressed earlier as not satisfactory. Their diet pattern was rich in fat content alone and was inadequate to supply the much needed proteins, Calcium and Iron. The indicators pointing to their health status were found to be dismally poor, especially their affordability to spend on personal health care and nutritious food. Satisfaction derived by the concerned sample on the primary and secondary indicators proved that they lacked in many of the indicators presented in the checklist like economic, health, social and infrastructure under primary and literacy and ignorance and leisure under secondary.

- **Existing quality of living status:** Quality of living is an umbrella term which encompasses in its fold many aspects related to a sample like satisfaction of primary and secondary indicators, extent of access to and effective use of available resources for livelihood, awareness/ perception on rights and amenities entitled to, socio – economic status, decision making power and finally perception on indicators to be satisfied for qualifying as being empowered.

Existing data obtained through primary and secondary sources on measurable select parameters of social, infrastructure, transport, fuel and nutrition (used in Social Development Report 2011- recent statistic), were compared with the projected rates given in the report. Except for total electrification of the entire settlement, none of the parameters put forth by the Social Development Report 2011 (latest census) were found to have been effectively satisfied in the chosen settlement.

- **Access to Resources:** Benefits accrued through abiotic and biotic components in the select locale projected the lack of knowledge and shrewdness on the part of the sample and to be complaining of restricted access to those resources. Whichever they could do like farming on small patches of land and micro level livelihood alone they were found to respond. Similarly the forest area provided them ample provisions for NTFP and MFP, among which benefits from only a few were capitalized. Inborn shyness, timidity and reluctance to socialize for their own benefit had hindered with their progress.
- **Livelihood (women):** A significant finding was that the women of the household mainly helped in farming activities and they were responsible exclusively for collection and processing of NTFP and MFP as those formed their **major livelihood activity** other than livestock rearing or employment in unorganized sector (Scheme jobs, brick kilns etc.), evidently proving **feminization of labour**. Unfortunately, they promoted an **indigenous skill**

and product, but were used only to conventional processing methods and trading. This was a major drawback because they produced only in consumable quantities and **not with an idea of commercialization**. It had never occurred to them. **Drudgery and labour** involved with the collection and processing had had an impact. Their **dependence on eco – based livelihood** and their knowledge on available resources and their potential economic value were made explicit through the study.

On inquiry regarding their awareness on rights and amenities available pointed to their **lack of knowledge, perception and enjoyment about many of the indicators**, those which should have been brought to their awareness by the Government and should have been imbibed for their good. A lacuna from the part of the local governance and the leaders on these matters is quite visible, which was suggestive of further action that should be included in the agenda meant for their empowerment.

- **Economic Status:** Analysis of their income level revealed their status to be poor. All belonged to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) as per HUDCO classification. Based on Rangarajan Committee's guidelines (quoted by Varma, 2018) which considered per capita income (< Rs.32) and monthly per capita expenditure (< Rs.972), 31.48 and 27.7 per cent respectively were found to fall in that category. On the basis of the projected rates computed based on current and constant prices for 2017-18 more than 85 per cent earned only below the published ceilings. Records maintained by the local governance in the village had categorized them under Below Poverty Line (BPL) and had provided for maximum benefits from the fair price shops functioning under Public Distribution System (PDS).
- **SES of the sample:** Attempts on categorizing the sample based on computation of their **Socio Economic Status (SES)** using modified Kuppaswamy Scale found 46.29 and 27.7 per cent to fit in the upper middle and lower middle classes respectively. Similarly on an exercise administering modified BG Prasad Scale, 64.8 featured in the low middle class and 22.2 in the low class. Evidently their economic status either taken alone or when fitted to the social parameters brought out their poor stature.
- **Decision making behaviour:** Findings obtained with regard to the sample's position in **decision making situations revealed that in none of the situations** (presented to them) **all of them enjoyed full freedom**. They were in all walks of life including matters like personal care were influenced by others and they enjoyed very little say in decision making.

Even in pointers such as visiting relatives/ friends, education of children, **only those who spent from their personal earnings had little power**. Dependents (non-earning women) never had any option in decision making. To gain this status, the study pinpointed **to empowering themselves through earning a livelihood as the only option available**.

- **Status of empowerment:** Responses received (on introspection) for the Empowerment scale revealed them to be high in **cultural aspects** followed by psychological and economic matters. Their status was low for social aspects and very poor for political indicators. The study proved that they need to emerge empowered mainly on social and economic aspects as these two indicators if focused upon could bring in the much needed **behavioural and attitudinal changes** in them.

The findings pertaining to this aspect of the study laid in roads highlighting the factors where there was **visible lacuna** and stressed the need for **active involvement of the samples and the community** at large in **holistic development strategies to bring in changes in people, their behaviour, attitudes, life styles, access to resources and income generating endeavours**. This necessitated conscientizing and sensitizing the samples to scan their living environment, analyze by selves what they have, what they are entitled to and what they are not utilizing and comprehend the *raison d'être* for their low empowerment status – an exercise on introspection.

- **Introspection leading to reflection:** Responses received for the modified 4C's framework on human well – being (framed to suit the studied social context) revealed the sample's (women) **total dependence on eco – based livelihood options** and also projected that they were **not shrewd enough to use their cognitive abilities** to access them, the needed resources effectively. They had the **traditional knowledge and skill**, but were found to put marginal use of them and refrain from commercialization of their products of labour. They were **cases of latent potential, less productively utilized**. Many a tangible resources which they had access to like the **natural resources (NFTP and MFP)** available from the reserve forest where they belonged to and various **Schemes floated by the Government** in their favour were **not utilized** because of their inborn shyness, timid nature, lethargy and self-inflicted inhibitions. Tackling this **starting trouble through proper intervention and paving way for changing them on personal and communal aspects was what they waited for**. The findings in a way conveyed status on the de- facto and de- jure empowerment the

samples experienced plus the truth that their subjective enjoyment basically depended only on their ignorance and reluctance to seek means of empowerment by selves.

Scanning for existing possible negative factors that acted as **deterrents to the sample's empowerment** revealed a host of them like nature of the settlement, living styles, illiteracy, means of livelihood, traditional/ indigenous practices, ignorance on value addition, leadership and trading deficiency, cognitive and infrastructural constraints, financial constraints and lack of control over resources, absence of institutionalized production and marketing of products, weak linkages and communication facilities resulting in poor networking, fragile village solidarity leading to dilution in interest about community welfare, ignorance about their rights and privileges, laws for protection, insecurity and timidity to negotiate with foresters, inability to muster organized efforts for personal and communal good so on and so forth. Except a few all other factors, promised situations to be lending well for effecting changes in people, their perceptions, resource use and means of empowerment. Layers of 'dream zones' was identified and shown to the samples as possible guide lines for their self-empowerment.

With this backdrop a **problem tree** to locate pockets of factors contributing as deterrents and **solution blooms** to decide on action packages which could be implemented were drafted. The analysis helped to thrash out visible problems by devising feasible proposals, if implemented could widen their options for quality – infused well – being.

➤ **Springboard:** Based on all the above observations the intervention strategies were devised. **First attempt was to sensitize the women** to reflect on their past experiences which were real hurdle stones to their empowerment. The exercise – another dimension of introspection - enabled the samples to recall their past and reflect on the present. It revealed that the settlement in *toto* had surrendered to effect changes in their lives, mainly in those related to food habits, living styles, personal grooming and the like, for which a little inclination from their part to socialize and capitalize from Government doles, fair price shops and schemes were visible evidences. They provided ample evidence for the sample's ability for **reflection and reflexivity**.

➤ **Devising viable strategies:** As proactive endeavours to conscientize the samples to understand what they need to dream for self-empowerment a host of meetings and interactive sessions highlighting livelihood options, resource access, personal development, life enrichment skills, advantages of group cohesion especially forming Self Help Groups (SHG),

team work for communal good, socialization and networking, trading benefits and the like were organized. **Values** imparted included motivation to become self-reliant, instilling leadership qualities, creating visibility, rapport creation for healthy networking. Such interactive sessions and participative forums rendered as eye openers to understand the social, economic, infrastructural and procedural constraints the samples encountered and showed insights for practical interventions to be devised to improve their plight.

➤ **Creating enabling environments through interventions**

This part of the study focused on facilitating connections and capabilities through capacity building with thrust on:

- **Development of technical and functional skills**
- **Facilitating leadership development**
- **Real Time Training and skill development**
- **Infrastructure and Support for Creating an Enabling Environment**
- **Enhancing Practical Skills and Networking**
- **Sustainable community strategies**

➤ **Development of technical and functional skills:** The socio economic survey and subsequent studies had highlighted the **major two indigenous skills** the women were adept with and taken up as livelihood options on home scale basis, namely **preparation of a Herbal (organic) hair wash powder** with a Minor Forest Produce (**MFP**) and **collection and processing of tamarind**, a Non –timber Forest product (**NTFP**). It emerged as an **indigenous untapped virgin potential**. **Resource access** was put forth as a major predicament. Hence interactions leading to fruitful deliberations where the **Forest department** agreed to provide **access to select tribe women to collect leaves and also take tamarind trees on auction** was achieved and **properly documented with minutes**. Based on this strong footing the samples were asked to attend and benefit from **preliminary round ups on skill development and up gradation of indigenous skills** by exposing them to various demonstrations, field visits, display/ sales exercises etc.

➤ **Facilitating leadership development:** To impart the instrumental component of empowerment, significance of group cohesion was insisted on. That led to the formation of a Self Help Group, a gender – friendly delivery mechanism to ensure group cohesion, leadership and promotion of an indigenous skill. **The SHG “Poocharam Mooligai Porutkal SHG”** was thus formed enrolling **20 willing women and appointing three key members as office bearers**. A **bank account** was also facilitated in the name of the SHG.

Banking on the activities of the SHG, a **Common Livelihood Group (CLG)** for **Personal Empowerment** of Tribe Women was initiated. By receiving the **Udhyog Aadhar Certificate** from the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises** the SHG was **registered** under the name '**Senkuttai Herbal CLG**'. The intervention provided definitely had helped the women to achieve an eco – based status of well – being, thus proving the fifth hypothesis (H₅), set for the study. They had understood that the products they marketed had market value, consumption value and commercial value.

The spelt out livelihood options taken up by the SHG was making **herbal hair wash powder** from **Alibizia amara leaves**, **taking auction**, processing, grading and packing of **clean tamarind**, **preserving gooseberry** as edible product and **making flour** from different cereals and pulses. **Initial endeavours** was to promote only the **former two**, but the **CLG willingly** took up the **latter two options as livelihood diversification activities**, a **tangible proof of their self-confidence and empowerment**. **Based on these arguments the third hypothesis (H₃) set for the study is rejected.**

- **Real Time Training and Skill Development:** Right from selection of tribal resources to production and management of labour, the women were enrolled in various training programmes conducted with appropriate stakeholder support on different topics, venue, and date and resource persons. Importance of maintenance of attendance and Minutes of various programmes was also insisted up on. This built a platform for instilling values of team spirit, leadership and entrepreneurship and made them realize the importance of collective work.
- **Infrastructure and support for Creating an Enabling Environment:** With this motive in mind adequate provision for funds flow enabling procurement of infrastructure – a workplace, machinery, accessory items, power supply- to name the major one's was obtained from various sources and stakeholder support. Funds flow to the tune of Rs. 5,00,000/- was mobilized apart from the room constructed exclusively through efforts of the Forest Department. The activities eventually enabled gaining trust on the project taken up and promised cooperation from the dwellers, both men and women in establishing and running the CLG - an appreciative outcome to mobilize action in the community for collective good. The training imparted gave the necessary impetus to the women in assigning labour for collection and processing of MFP/ NTFP and prove their individuality in decision making and management of labour and funds.

- **Enhancing Practical Skills and Networking:** Exposing tribe women to the harsh realities of the market and marketing procedures, field visits enabling them to make informed decisions to place order and purchase required machinery was organized where they emerged successful. Likewise obtaining permission to bid auction of tamarind, though entitled to but which never happened earlier was also materialized with proper interventive measures.
- **Sustainable community strategies:** To rope in the entire settlement on aspects from which all could benefit and improve communal well – being was also in the pipeline of activities framed. In this regard installing a solar bore well, desilting an old pond, alternate livelihood options, approval for scheme house, health and hygiene camps, employment options, International Tribal Day and the like were planned in consultation with both the concerned Government officials and the settlement dwellers. The people were involved in decision making, planning and implementing them.
- **Well – being Strategies targeted:** Follow up actions to comply with the interventions put forth included implementing the set objectives. To this effect achieving the targets was given priority as all had to be transformed from **amorphous to apparent**. The focus was therefore on well –being strategies.

Time bound intervention strategies taken up motivated and mobilized women and the community, ensured funds flow, and infrastructural support by provision of an enabling environment to sustain the fruits of the training programmes organized in their favour. The SHG formed, through their CLG activities pitched in many eager residents, both men and women to help in the collection of the eco – based resources, thus indirectly creating employment opportunities. They handled the labour management issues and payment of wages very tactfully. **Marketing their products with registered logo which was graded, packed and labeled** beautifully was a success beyond their dreams which they acknowledged with gratitude.

- **Visible footprints of empowered status of tribal women:** Being able to utilize eco – based MFP/ NTFP from their own forest and converting them into useful products in **tradable quantities** enhanced their entrepreneurial skills and there was a boost to their sentiments in the role played simultaneously as consumers and conservationists of their indigenous resources. They could also practice wealth from waste, especially talking of the herbal hair wash powder as a livelihood activity. They could **access both local resources and the remunerative markets** at the same time and improve socio economic as well as entrepreneurial status by venturing in **micro enterprises**.

All attempts hitherto discussed have enabled achieving the dual motto set to reduce poverty status of women by facilitating sustainable livelihoods and streamlining it on a gender-oriented perspective. **The major transformation** preferred was **changing the women from dependent to independent mode or self-reliant mode**. The fact that they are **producing and marketing the products and were paying the power consumption bills** regularly stand testimony to the **sustainability of the eco – based livelihood options** they were trained on.

- **Changes in behaviour and attitude:** The outcomes were assessed based on concrete visible footprints and impressions evinced in the women and the community in terms of the changes they have imbibed in their personal/ societal lives, participation, productivity, sense of achievement, social interactions, networking, sensitivity to problems, bargaining power, managerial acumen and the like. Awe-inspiring changes in the behavioural and attitudinal changes of the tribal women could be observed. Definitely they had become empowered on all dimensions of development and were found to have imbibed positive notions about well – being concepts. As the fruits of intervention show incredible progress in the women's awareness levels Hypothesis (H₂) set for the study is accepted.

- **Community welfare and well – being:** Activities organized with due concern for the Irular settlement at Senguttaiyur at large, showcased realistic development as evidenced through their active participation in all the camps, village up liftment and housing projects, group dynamics for creating water sources so on and so forth. Enthusiasm showed in conduct of all programmes by both men and women as a cohort in connection with the International Tribal Day celebrations had enabled mutual benefits for the community as well as the sponsors involved in it. Based on the light of the findings the fourth hypothesis (H₄) set for the study is accepted.

Administration of the Empowerment scale post intervention revealed visible changes in the outlook of the women, specifically, their perception being higher for social factors followed by cultural and psychological. Though not very significant their awareness on economic indicators also had shown higher levels. The findings revealed that the samples had improved in their empowerment awareness status on all pointers and the values were significant at 1% level. **These are proof to show that their knowledge level on all the five types of indicators of empowerment had improved well. Hence the hypothesis (H₂) set for the study is accepted.** Correlation analysis on empowerment status of the samples verses select independent variables was done. The findings proved negative correlation for age @ 5% level and positive correlation with education @1% level for pre intervention index. But the same for the post intervention index showed positive correlation with education alone at 1 % level. It is very obvious that education of the samples played a major role in the comprehension of the empowerment indicators. Progress and changes in

Irular women on socio – economic indicators evinced through the intervention mechanisms project the following achievements as visible evidences for satisfying the **objectives** set for the study

- **Redefined gender rules and norms leading to cultural empowerment**
- **Ownership of productive assets, the SHG for economic/ entrepreneurial empowerment**
- **Leadership in community as proof of social improvement and social status**
- **Record & account maintenance, proof of informed decision making and psychological empowerment**
- **Awareness about socio-economic development programmes, resulting in sociological empowerment**

Conclusion

- ✓ The Livelihood approach (diversification) adopted for the study vouched for the settlement's (and the women's in particular) habitat development , retention of culture and indigenous skill, comprehensive socio- economic development, improvement in quality of life, need based training on indigenous skill, optimal utilization of resources (Physical, natural and human), empowerment of women on viable inroads and networking for mutual benefits.

The study had paved way for the samples to realize all the three types of empowerment benefits namely normative, substantive and instrumental in both scales of empowerment such as individual and collective.

- ✓ Formation of SHG enabled bringing in **economic and psychological benefits to the Irular tribe women** and also enabled **social empowerment** at large. The evidences of transformed stature of women as outputs by and large focus on the success of the endeavours as inputs. Further action to sustain their status has to be thought of on the following lines

Recommendations: The following suggestions are put forth for further action:

Research work

- ❖ **Capacity building on more livelihood diversification endeavours**
- ❖ **Scan the locale for other livelihood options**
- ❖ **Draft and implement proposals to ensure emotional well-being of women**
- ❖ **Devise educational attempts to erase existing gender related idiosyncrasies**

- ❖ Draft and implement projects for preventing growth of Lantana Camara, a parasitic weed damaging the flora in the reserve forest area
- ❖ Resource recovery of Lantana Camara for productive use
- ❖ Enlighten settlers on their legitimate rights

Government – local, State and Central

- ❖ Public hearing on thrashing out tribal requirements
- ❖ Focused attempts on strengthening community platforms
- ❖ Package programmes to improve general and reproductive health status
- ❖ Access to educational institutions within the village boundaries and motivating action.
- ❖ Enforcement of all Governmental scheme programmes the PVTG is entitled to
- ❖ Expand prospects for employment of tribal population
- ❖ Should encourage local storage and processing by the tribal dwellers themselves to benefit during lean periods and enable large buyers to be in connection and reduce layers of intermediaries.
- ❖ Provide potable water supplies through public distribution
- ❖ Create common platforms for networking with government officials
- ❖ Enroll women as a mandate candidature in politics
- ❖ Ensure social protection for the dependent population
- ❖ Enroll more women and encourage more SHG's on other livelihood tasks.

NGOs and Philanthropists

- ❖ Help to expand infrastructural facilities in the settlement area
- ❖ Adoption of children for enabling higher studies
- ❖ Implement CSR activities by adopting the settlement

Tribals

Village level based organizations should be made to understand the economic value of MFP/NTFP to use them in a sustainable and systematic way through capacity building.

The research endeavour taken up was successful in achieving the set objectives. At the same time it has opened up prospects for research on different dimensions that can be pursued by researchers in future. It is fervently hoped that the findings of the study would be starting points for others to follow such that the endeavour taken up would continue to be really sustainable for the Irular tribe women in their eco – based environments.